E-Government Conference Presentation
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Title: Nebraska Technology Showcase
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                  Helen Meeks, NE Dept of HHS Regulations and Licensure
                  Steve Henderson, NE Information Management Services Division
                  Susan France, NE Dept of Natural Resources
Moderator: Dorest Harvey

<u>Talking Points</u>:

<u>Technology Projects</u>:
- In April 1998, I prepared a "white paper" as a means of committing to paper, my ideas on the utilization of technology to support the processes involved in the issuance and renewal of licenses for health care professionals and health care facilities and services.

- In this paper, I identified that the Credentialing Division was <u>committed</u> to the utilization of technology to provide access to licensure information and therefore the Division had set a goal for itself to have in place by the year 2000 a system that would allow health care professionals and facilities to perform certain licensure transaction by computers and receive information from us computers. The type of transactions identified included:
  1. application submission (new and renewed licenses);
  2. update information (address and name changes);
  3. print applications and other forms;
  4. retrieve licensure information (licensee names, addresses, licensure status, including any disciplinary information); and
  5. Production of licensee lists and labels.

- In this paper, I identified the course of action, including the steps that would be necessary for the Credentialing Division to achieve this goal.   These steps were:
  1. Acquire a system that had the flexibility, adaptability, and connectivity to link computers that were in use in the marketplace at that time, including INTERNET capability.
  2. Convert all licensure data to a single database that could be accessed with minimal risk of database destruction, tampering, or modification.
  3. Develop, implement and maintain the necessary incentives to enhance utilization of the in-place technology (e.g., fee differentiation, shorter turn around times, etc.), particularly online transactions for licensure renewal, acquiring lists and labels, information submission and retrieval.

- We set out on this course of action and on April 1, 1997 issued and RFP for the acquisition of system that would:
  1. allow for housing all licensure information into one system; and
  2. Allow for Internet connectivity for accessing this information.

- The Licensing Information System (LIS) was installed in October 1997 (the week of a major snowstorm); and it became fully operational with all professions converted into this system in the summer of 1998. This version remained in use up until August 2002 at which time we underwent a major upgrade (Licensing 2002, version 3.2.).

- In March 1999, we went live with access to professional and occupational licensure information through the web site www.hhs.state.ne.us/lis/lis.asp

- This installation and operation accomplished Steps 1 & 2 towards meeting our established goal.

- With reference to Step 3, the Credentialing Division has accomplished the following with the help of IS&T, NE Online, and our LIS vendor:
  1. In 2003 the option for online renewal of licenses was in place for eight professions and occupations, within which various categories of licenses exists, including dentists, dental hygienists, pharmacies, medical nutrition therapists, Licensed Practical Nurses, Physical Therapists, Physical Therapists Assistants, out-of-hospital Emergency Medical Service Providers (EMTs at the Intermediate and Paramedic Levels, and First Responders), Water System Operators and Well Drillers.
  2. For 2004 we have identified six other professions and occupations to which we would like to make the option for online licensure renewal available. These professions and occupations are Funeral Directors and Embalmers, Veterinarians, Respiratory Care Practitioners, Chiropractors, Occupational Therapists, Optometrists.

- The online licensure renewal process was made possible at no cost to Credentialing Division, other than staff time commitment, by a grant from the State Records that was obtained by Steve Shafer, Nebraska's Chief Information Officer to fund NE Online to develop the application necessary to make online licensure renewal come to fruition.

- Other technology projects that are underway with NE Online are:
  1. electronic production of licensee lists and labels; and
  2. Online completion and return of various licensure applications and associated forms.
  3. Secure web site for submission of complaints against health care professional and facilities.

<u>Obstacles and Hurdles</u>:
1. Severing ties with the Mainframe system and moving to a stand-alone system.
2. Working through the logistics of writing an RFP for a system, RFP evaluation and vendor selection.
3. Holding the vendor to commitment to get the system installed and operational.
4. Privacy concerns of licensees brought about by online access to licensure information.
   a. misinformation regarding what is/is not public information;
   b. licensees' perceived ownership of information that is about them;
   c. address confidentiality issues and legislation; and
   d. Records purging issues, particularly as it pertains to disciplinary information—balance between the public's right to know and licensees' reputation.
5. Low utilization of online licensure renewal option.

<u>What's on the Horizon—Future Plans</u>:
- Adding other licensure information to the LIS
  1. Child care November 15th
  2. Health Care Facilities and Services, some are already included with more to follow.
  3. Certified Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors

- Add the text of disciplinary action information.

- Select a vendor to provide the online licensure process—currently evaluating the processes provided by NE Online and another vendor, System Automation to determine which application to institute.
- Implementation of a marketing strategy to enhance utilization of the online services that are available to the general public and licensees.

- We plan to "stay the course" and stick to my vision of "licensing information at everyone's fingertips". We will continue to advance my philosophy that:
  1. When persons need to access NE State governmental services they should not be limited to the hours that the statehouse is opened.
  2. Governmental services should be accessed in as seamless a manner as possible and be available when people want to access those services.
  3. I would like the public to think, "we never sleep".

HLM
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